



KRISTIN GISLESON PALMER  
COUNCILMEMBER - DISTRICT C

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*New Orleans City Council*

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May 14, 2019

**VIA EMAIL**

Gregg Fortner, Executive Director  
Housing Authority of New Orleans  
4100 Touro Street  
New Orleans, LA 70122

**RE: HANO Proposed Development in Bywater**

Dear Mr. Fortner,

The Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) has proposed building a mixed-use development on a large vacant lot located at 4100 Royal Street in Bywater, also known as the Royal Mazant site. HANO awarded the development of this site as well as 5 other scattered site parcels throughout Faubourg Marigny and Bywater to the developer ITEX, who now will both develop and manage all sites. Some of these properties are also under covenant agreements with HUD and can only be developed for affordable housing.

The current zoning for the Royal Mazant site is split between HMR-3 and HMC-2 and under this zoning, up to 108 units can be built. The zoning for the scatter sites is HMR-3, with a maximum of 20 units allowable on all sites combined.

The developer currently proposes to build 136 units on the Royal Mazant site and 10 single family homes on all the scattered sites. The single-family homes will be a mixture of market rate and affordable and will yield five of each number. In order to build 136 units on the Royal Mazant site, the developer requested a zoning change from HMR-3/HMC-2 to HU-MU. This zoning would allow up to 189 units to be built on that site.

There have been a number of public meetings regarding the project and we appreciate the work of ITEX listening to the community and trying to address some of the issues. However, I believe we still have work to do.

First and foremost, all stakeholders, from the neighbors to HANO to advocates have agreed that 90 affordable units is the right number for this development. However, drawing on my

experience in working in affordable housing for 25 years, I believe these numbers can be accomplished through a more thoughtful and equitable approach. This starts by reducing the overall number of units to be built on the Mazant site. Typically, a single development needs to include a significant number of market rate units to offset the affordable ones. However, the five additional scatter sites tied to this same project allow us to think more creatively. If we upzone those sites to allow for more dense development, we can reach a minimum of 90 affordable units. While this may bring some additional costs, HANO could offset this by offering additional project based vouchers to the developer. HANO has the ability and resources to make this happen. This is a neighborhood that has already experienced a large amount of displacement for low income and working-class families, so our primary goal must be reestablishing opportunities for them.

Some might ask the benefit of reducing the number of units at the Royal Mazant site. I firmly believe that any development must reflect the character of the neighborhood it goes into. HDLC has set clear guidelines for how new buildings in this area should look, and I believe those should be followed. I also believe that too often when we build affordable housing, we leave out the amenities that make a place livable. That means having adequate green space for residents and neighbors alike to gather and enjoy recreational activities. It means having a comprehensive storm water management plan that keeps as many trees as possible and adequately replaces those that must be cut down. It means making provisions for all types of transportation, including a covered bus stop for the Marigny/Bywater Chartres line and ample bike parking.

Ninety units of affordable housing fits the need in our city to establish real opportunity near our employment centers and public transit corridors. I understand the benefit to the developer of placing them all at one site as a way of reducing costs. However, best practice shows us that good development fits within an existing built environment that is sensitive to scale, setback, and design and building regulations.

This development can and will happen if ITEX and HANO work together to produce a project that is creative. They have as a partner a councilmember that believes in affordable housing and smart design, and a community that wants both. It is time for them to produce.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristin Palmer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kristin Gisleson Palmer  
Councilmember, District C